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Lessons Learned in the Inner City

Results from the USDA Forest Service Inner City Forum Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania August 7, 2004

This publication shares the voices, experience, and expertise of individuals striving to engage community residents, catalyze a stewardship ethic, and build local capacity in some of the most challenging urban environments in America.

Contents

Overview and Introduction 1

Challenges and Methods to Engaging Community Residents.....5

Challenges and Methods to Catalyzing Tree Stewardship.....11

Challenges and Methods to Developing Community Capacity.....16

Special Thanks and Contacts 22

Before a tree planting project

After a tree planting project

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Results from the USDA Forest Service Inner City Forum
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August 7, 2004

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Overview

On August 7, 2004, the USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry hosted a forum for State and local organizations to capture lessons learned over 10 years of Federal investment in inner-city communities. This publication shares the voices, experience, and expertise of individuals striving to engage community residents, catalyze a stewardship ethic, and build local capacity in some of the most challenging urban environments in America. It is our hope that readers will use this information to spark ideas, replicate success, avoid failure, and speed their own efforts in improving environmental equity, public health, economic development, and quality of life in distressed communities nationwide.

Introduction

The USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program provides technical and financial assistance to State and local agencies and nonprofit organizations with the goal of improving trees and forests where people live, work, and play. Each administrative region of the Forest Service delivers the program tailored to meet unique needs defined by State and local partners with input from established State advisory councils.

The Northeastern Area of the Forest Service extends across the 20 Northeast and Midwest States and the District of Columbia. The region is home to nearly 43 percent of the Nation's population, 85 percent of which (102 million residents) live within 103 metropolitan areas. For many of these residents, the urban forest is the only forest they encounter.

A tremendous body of literature has been established through investments in Forest Service and academic research that demonstrates why inner cities deserve agency focus, not the least of which is that these communities have the lowest percent tree cover and highest population densities. Studies show that improving the quality of trees, forests, and parks in these distressed communities can have a significant impact on metropolitan air and water resources, associated public health, economic development, and quality of city life overall.

Experience demonstrates that government cannot make a lasting impact locally without the help of individuals and organizations who are committed to building vibrant communities. Then again, nonprofit organizations need support from local government to follow through with equipment, supplies, and long-term maintenance for many of their community improvements. In a strong public/private partnership, both parties learn from and support one another to achieve a common goal.

For our purposes, "inner city" generally refers to areas of dense population dominated by a manmade environment. These communities are not necessarily low income or underserved in terms of social services, but have common characteristics of low levels of average tree cover and poor access to parks and green space. Participants in this unique forum had an average of 15 years of public service experience, totaling more than 300 years of expertise. The forum focused on three principal challenges identified as common to all: engaging inner-city residents, catalyzing a stewardship ethic, and building or sustaining community capacity. Several hours were spent in dialogue on each of these topics and the voices and experience are captured here, edited only to avoid duplication.

Participant Organizations

California ReLeaf, Sacramento, California
Casey Trees Endowment Fund, Washington, DC
Community-Based Communications, Cheverly, Maryland
DC Greenworks
Delaware Center for Horticulture, Wilmington
Eagle Eye Institute, Boston Area
Eden Place Nature Center, Chicago
Greening for Breathing, Bronx, New York
Greening Milwaukee
National Alliance for Community Trees
NatureTalks, Hawaii
New Jersey Tree Foundation
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
New York City Parks & Recreation
Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, Pittsburgh
Openlands Project, Chicago
Parks & People Foundation, Baltimore
Pennsylvania State University
Philadelphia Green, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
Pittsburgh Shade Tree Commission
Rhode Island Division of Forest Environment
Shaw EcoVillage Project, Washington, DC
Southeast Environmental Task Force, Chicago
The Greening of Detroit
Tree Trust, Minneapolis
Trees New York
University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, Manchester, NH
Urban Ecology Institute, Boston Area
Urban Resources Initiative, New Haven
USDA Forest Service

A. Why we target inner-city communities

1. We serve the State's largest cities and target shade tree plantings in urban areas where tree cover is lowest, where the need is greatest, and where funders want to spend their grant dollars.
2. We promote sustainable redevelopment and rehabilitation of the region's brownfields and remnant forest land to reduce stormwater flow and regenerate ground water resources.
3. We bring urban forestry activities to low-income, minority communities as a way to meet the triple bottom line: bring green to neighborhoods dominated by concrete, promote tree stewardship as a means to build community cohesion and capacity, and create jobs for the many unemployed members of these communities.
4. We replant trees and provide environmental education within the borders of a city that has lost thousands of trees to neglect.
5. We motivate at-risk youth and adults to replant and maintain their neighborhood trees.
6. We provide urban youth with a transformational experience in the natural environment, developing a respect for nature, peer leadership abilities, a stewardship ethic, and a sense of "place" in the world, which helps them to be better engaged community citizens.
7. Our focus is the development of sustainable urban and community forestry programs built on sound research and technology, volunteer participation, effective partnerships, and the integration of the community's political/policy, social, and environmental infrastructure.
8. Service to inner-city communities is integral to the success of our State program overall: "to practice and promote sound stewardship and conservation of public, private, and community forest lands; to monitor and nurture forest health; to assist municipalities with the development of their tree resources; and to achieve forest-related economic, environmental, and social benefits for current and future generations."

B. Who is our target audience

1. We work with anyone who is interested and willing from all social and economic classes and with all sorts of conditions; we work with ex-offenders, people on drugs, kids, teachers, homeowners, and community organizations.
2. We attract a very eclectic crowd to our training events, with upscale neighborhood residents and welfare recipients sitting side by side. We have a multiracial staff and attract people of all education levels.

Baby Steps—
We work block by block. We spend time getting to know the neighbors on a block before any tools or trees enter the picture. We attend many community meetings, and we schedule one-on-one neighborhood walks with community leaders and residents. We then work with them to organize a project. When we knock on doors, we are always working side by side with a community member. We bring the neighbors into the planning process. We know our volunteers by name and by face.

—DC Greenworks

3. We have a cross section of audiences: builders and developers, urban forestry professionals, community volunteers, teachers, and decisionmakers at both the local and State levels. Representatives from all sizes of communities come to our training events; we bridge urban and rural forest communities.
4. In most of our inner-city communities, minorities comprise at least 50 percent of the population. Our underserved communities are primarily African American, while some neighborhoods have large Latino populations and are major destinations for immigrants and refugees from Cambodia, Bosnia, the Sudan, and other areas.
5. We target resources to sections of cities where most people never visit or even hear about, unless it is in the context of homicide statistics. The schools are starved of resources, and the business corridors are less than thriving.
6. Many organizations we work with have executive boards whose majorities comprise minority representation.
7. In New Jersey, Latinos are the State's largest ethnic minority population, growing more than 50 percent between 1990 and 2000. In the same decade, the Asian and Pacific Islander population grew nearly 75 percent, the Black population grew nearly 10 percent, and the White population declined by almost 1 percent. Urban centers are host to most of the State's people of color.

C. How community interests are incorporated into our decisions

1. Community residents are the roots of sustainable change, so we are intentional about listening to them. Specific tools include focus group meetings, phone surveys, one-on-one interviews, and community forums.
2. Because we are outsiders coming in to serve and assist communities that are not our own, we work with homeowner's associations, block clubs, and other civic groups to identify sites the community feels are critical to the restoration of their neighborhoods.
3. Our focus is on resident-led initiatives, understanding that the people who live in the neighborhood know what's best for the neighborhood.

4. We maintain community profiles that include information about a community's needs and have an advisory council with diverse representation from the communities we serve.
5. We periodically conduct surveys and collect data about the ways our training programs can be improved and the kind of continuing educational programs that are desired.

D. What critical challenges we face in engaging community residents

1. We have limited or no presence in African American and Latino communities. It takes a long-term commitment to tailor our programs and technical assistance to best address the needs of these communities.
2. We are competing against the need for affordable housing, health services, childcare, better schools, and police protection. We are facing a population of people who have witnessed and dealt with generational poverty. The effects of these socioeconomic conditions on their ability to embrace greening as a change agent for improving their daily lives are a huge challenge.
3. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: it is hard to get people to look at the benefits of trees when food, safety, and shelter are not adequately addressed.
4. Engaging renters and absentee property owners is a challenge. Why improve the neighborhood when they hope to soon move to a better place or expect never to return?
5. We face prejudice between two or more culturally different groups of people often in the same neighborhood. There are few people of color and ethnicity that can bridge work into diverse communities.
6. Recruiting already overburdened volunteers to do labor-intensive activities is a challenge. Most community members are working two jobs and cannot attend evening meetings or Saturday morning workshops. We tend to get more volunteers from outside of the city than residents inside.
7. Volunteers have more opportunities now than ever and getting them to make a solid commitment beyond a 1-day event is hard.
8. Youth in cities face diminished community resources in all forms, including after school and vacation/summer youth programming activities. With funding for virtually every program in jeopardy, just maintaining the attention of stakeholders is a challenge.
9. Our organization consists of a dichotomy of affluent supporters, participant volunteers, and inner-city residents. Each has a different need and our challenge has been to bring them together.
10. Some of our State programs are time sensitive and large scale in multiple municipalities. Coupled with a set, small staff, it is a challenge to conduct and facilitate robust stakeholder engagement.

E. How we engage community residents

1. We meet our community members where they are. We attend their meetings, listen to their problems, and walk around their neighborhoods. We take time to establish a level of credibility and trust before we really talk about trees. We are patient as we plan our projects, but we are not scared to pester our community members when it comes time to implement.
2. We form partnerships with existing inner-city organizations and position ourselves as the primary community-based environmental organization in the region.

3. To gain footholds in neighborhoods, we make connections with those residents who have an appreciation for the environment. By planting trees with these key residents, adjacent neighbors become involved and request new trees.
4. We form teams to adopt specific blocks and parks.
5. Getting kids involved is one of the better ways we engage adults.
6. Our community grants encourage residents to develop and implement their own vision. As we learn through evaluation, reflection, and study, we modify our grants and programs as best we can.

7. We identified several methods for engaging residents, including:
    - Holding repeated, face-to-face meetings (not just one-time)
    - Co-leading all strategies for youth outreach

- Knowing how the target group communicates
- Empowering the passionate core of the community
- Testing community process—bring two or three others to the next meeting; challenge a "closed" process
- Responsiveness and building trust (especially through public openness)
- Multitiered outreach and multiple time scales

8. Our process includes inviting resident volunteers to survey their community trees and working with individuals to develop an action plan.

9. We successfully recruit volunteers through word of mouth, city council newsletters, and articles in the paper.

F. Successful Models of Community Engagement

1. Gardening is what we use as the common denominator. This includes events and programs designed to bring people together, like the City Gardens Contest, Community Garden Plant Sales, Community Garden building with institutions and nonprofit service agencies such as prisons and community development corporations (CDC's), and volunteer days in parks and public landscapes. (*Delaware Center for Horticulture*)

2. We start with a press release announcing the availability of trees, generating bulk mailings to residents, community groups, churches, other nonprofits, the mayor and council, all city government offices, etc. Tree planting events are used to announce new programs in new cities. Kickoff events consist of a volunteer tree planting at a school or in a local community, a ceremony for public officials to speak at, and lots of public relations activities. All of our community outreach efforts help to engage more and more stakeholders. (*New Jersey Tree Foundation*)

3. We employ interns and youth workers who were once students in our training programs. We are building credibility in the community through multicultural hiring, board recruitment, and diverse program leadership. Residents can see that there are pathways to future career development and civic engagement modeled by our organization. We measure success by the degree to which our process is replicated by sister organizations. (*Eagle Eye Institute*)

4. Critical to our success has been the party atmosphere of our public meetings, including food and music, kids activities, educational displays, and open invitations to come back to the next meeting. (*Philadelphia Green*)

The Outdoor Living Room—
The concept of the "Outside Block" as the largest room in the house has been useful in engaging city residents in green improvements in their community. If residents feel the outdoors is part of their living space, they tend to be more committed to caring for it.

—Shaw EcoVillage

5. We work with our State extension service to recruit informed volunteers who are seeking collaborative projects. We communicate events and opportunities through the city's existing neighborhood government structure. The neighborhood or ward leaders also have city funding that can help to supplement our funding if they prioritize the projects. (*Tree Trust*)
6. We have created successful urban tree nurseries to build awareness of the need to plant trees in our community. We use these nurseries as training opportunities and educational offerings for schools, residents, and homeowners. (*Greening Milwaukee*)

G. Lessons learned in engaging community residents

1. At the State level, it is important for us to remain nonpolitical, working above and beyond to conduct meaningful and successful tree planting events. We always give participants credit for our successes.
2. In a word—relationships. We take the time to get to know our partners and to let them get to know us. We build a level of trust that allows us to speak honestly and work more effectively together. We understand that community revitalization is not an easy or short-term process. Residents and other stakeholders appreciate straightforward, clear explanations of issues and processes that can aid them. Creating opportunities for them to tell their own stories is especially effective in engaging them in becoming community leaders over the long term. Sincerity and commitment are important.
3. Integrity: We pride ourselves on doing what we say we will. In this way the completion of the last planting project can be used as an example for adjacent neighborhoods.
4. We train, nurture, recognize, and reward our volunteers.
5. Our tree planting events are well organized and have high participant satisfaction. The reasons for this include careful planning, attention to detail, trained team leaders, staff participation, and a fun-filled and satisfying experience for volunteers.

6. We have strong multimedia outreach and brand name value. This increases our visibility and strengthens our standing in communities.
7. Knowing our weakness: We have had limited success in engaging community members from the ethnically, culturally, and racially diverse neighborhoods of the city. We have begun to establish

partnerships with some grassroots and community-based organizations in these neighborhoods and hope to strengthen these partnerships through joint projects and community participation.

8. We are only successful where there are strong community-based organizations and block captains who know and have the support of local politicians and ward- or district-based community groups.
9. Our success depends on finding individuals in community-based organizations and in leadership roles that are empathetic to our cause of improving the quality of life through gardening and greening. We work with zealous community leaders, provide them with the resources, and let them do the legwork and community organizing from within.
10. We have strong partnerships with many local government organizations like the Departments of Parks and Recreation, Transportation, Urban Forestry, and Health, etc., as well as Federal agencies like the National Park Service and USDA Forest Service. These partnerships have strengthened the efficacy and enhanced the quality of our programs.
11. Our partnership with the city has been critical. They offer their services and assets to reforest our urban areas and core communities.

H. Our next steps to further engage community residents

1. We will try to coordinate more interaction among schools, businesses, and local groups to initiate a larger number and wider scope of environmental stewardship projects.
2. Beyond simply adopting young trees that we planted together, we may attempt to ask our community members to pay for our tree planting services.
3. We hope to deepen our understanding of the people we work with in order to improve our program delivery, training, outreach, etc. This includes hiring a community organizer to strengthen our outreach to stakeholders, improving the structure within which we work, and building new and better volunteer support systems. Community residents are the drivers for everything we hope to accomplish.
4. We are determined to more fully engage low-income residents and people of color in broader environmental causes and build a constituency for a greener and better city and region.
5. We intend to more closely monitor the impacts and effectiveness of our methods.

Who Are You Trying To Reach—

We should not automatically assume that outreach is necessary. Not every organization needs to do outreach. We may have enough audience for our existing capacity. Look at the benefit or need for outreach. More people mean greater costs. If the program is running successfully, word of mouth is outreach. Ask yourself, who are you trying to reach: Media? Community? Funders? Youth? Family? Other nonprofits?

—Shaw EcoVillage

6. Beyond street trees, we have begun a stream restoration/watershed project built from local community interest to engage members of two churches, a program for at-risk youth who are part of the juvenile justice system, members of established environmental organizations, and local residents. By staging small events, organizing cleanups, creating a new trail, and installing interpretive signs—all with the help of resident volunteers—we hope to engage stakeholders in both these and future environmental efforts.

7. We are writing State grant proposals to develop plans for smaller community parks and will engage stakeholders in that process.
8. We are going to target fewer communities in the future, but work with them in a more comprehensive approach. This includes building support from city council members and working with interested city staff, consultants, and tree inspectors to develop a "cookbook" approach to integrating trees into city infrastructure. In addition, we will train community volunteers to be effective advocates and participants in planning, implementing, and maintaining their community forestry program—both on private and public lands.

9. The next steps for us are to go beyond talking to handshake agreements, memoranda of understanding, and partnership agreements, including benchmark measures, goals and objectives, and predefined, meaningful, and relevant outcomes.
10. Before issuing press releases and hosting community events, we will do more to reach out to community groups, host community

meetings, educate targeted stakeholders, and address their concerns early and more thoroughly.

11. We will develop job opportunities in our organization, local government, and new and existing businesses to train and coordinate residents and plant and maintain the urban forest.
12. With a focus on sustainability, we will seek organizational structure or key ingredients to assure that our community projects don't disintegrate when a pivotal person loses energy, interest, or capacity to continue efforts in future years.
13. We will develop alternatives to college preparatory pathways for youth engaged in our programs.
14. Our reach will broaden into neighborhoods where the need for trees is greatest.

I. Critical challenges we face in catalyzing a tree stewardship ethic

1. Tree planting practices, selection, and early maintenance need to be improved if we wish to achieve sustainable landscapes and improved ecological services over time.
2. We are serving a rapidly growing community of interest with a limited staff and are having difficulty maintaining momentum after high-profile tree-planting events.
3. We are challenged by the attitude that it is the city's responsibility to take care of trees planted in public space. It is difficult to get a group of neighbors excited about a tree-care workshop and adoption responsibilities when this is seen as a city responsibility.
4. Few people realize how much care urban trees really need: weekly watering, seasonal mulching, and winter pruning. And relatively few residents are willing to take the time to learn about and fulfill these stewardship responsibilities. Environmental education is not a priority.
5. Our challenge is to build and maintain the organizational capacity of multiple neighborhood groups that are willing and able to take on tree maintenance responsibilities.
6. In the face of dwindling resources, we struggle to maintain a positive, constructive attitude by city agency staff.
7. A sense of hopelessness, low expectations, donor fatigue, and irrelevance strike us every day on the streets.
8. We need to overcome people's ignorance about the role of trees in the ecosystem and their economic value. Before people will

Tapping Into A Stewardship Ethic—

Our challenge is to reliably present information to community residents about the benefits of trees in such a way that is engaging, accessible, and directly relates to their quality of life. We must keep in mind that environmental education is not a priority for many residents in neighborhoods where we work. The willingness of city residents to commit time to what may be perceived as a municipal responsibility—the planting and care of city trees and parks—is limited.

—Parks & People Foundation

become interested in caring for trees, they have to believe that trees are a benefit, rather than a detriment, to their community.

9. Creating a vision and policies in which green principles are at the core of city planning and management is critical to developing an overall framework for stewardship.

10. Another challenge is lack of support from the top levels of city government for natural resource management. Our city has a barebones crew of 33 workers responsible for 500,000 street trees and 200,000 park trees. Innovation and creativity in programming are more difficult to advance in the fiscally constrained climate that exists among city agencies.

11. One of the hardest challenges to overcome is fostering a desire for tree stewardship in some of the older residents. Understandably, they do not want the responsibility for the maintenance of a tree.

12. There is a great need for more trees despite efforts of the city to plant them. Residents feel that we are in great shape because our city has a proactive tree planting and maintenance program; in reality, however, public trees represent only 20 percent of our canopy and the other 80 percent is on private property.

13. Our current struggle is to stay focused while there is so much interest and demand all around us. We want to measure what we are doing, and we do not have enough resources to attack the issues across a broader geographic area.

14. Invasive plants and insects present a challenge; a majority of inner-city mature trees are fast-growing weed species with weak (hazardous) wood strength and branch structure.

J. How we catalyze a tree stewardship ethic

1. We make our workshops accessible and fun. We do all of our teaching in a hands-on fashion right outside of the homes of our participants. Again, we meet them where they are. We share with them our love for trees, and we show them how easy it is to take good care of these valuable components of our urban environment. Moreover, our trainings are intimate. We are a community-based organization, and it shows. Our neighborhood groups are grateful for the time and effort we devote to them, and in return, we are grateful for the way they welcome us into their community.

2. We generate momentum, plugging in effective partners and working with people to bring about visible change. When residents see on-the-ground improvements, they are more apt to engage in the process.

3. Partnerships have been the key to our success. We work with Cooperative Extension and the State Council, local colleges, horticulture high schools, tree companies, utilities, and the city's Park Commission. We work together to cultivate long-term volunteers.
4. Communication, respect, and honesty—doing the right thing for the right reason strengthens partnerships. We have found that collective recognition is necessary to sustain the partnerships necessary for stewardship.
5. We present information in clear, straightforward language(s).
6. Block Captains and local pastors provide depth and breadth to our most successful community forestry work. They are part of the neighborhood fabric and understand the commitment necessary to build and sustain healthy communities.
7. We identify the people that are already interested in caring for trees and then work with them to get their neighbors excited, too. Asking people where they want to plant trees has been the key to them making a stewardship commitment.
8. We catalyze a stewardship ethic by linking our work to general quality-of-life concerns, like neighborhood aesthetics, abandoned cars, and infrequent trash pickup. Tree planting can significantly enhance a community's morale and sense of accomplishment.

K. Successful Models for Catalyzing a Tree Stewardship Ethic

1. Our Green Corps program is built on a foundation of teamwork. Currently, we employ 40 high school youth and 5 leaders to water trees, weed and maintain gardens, prune trees and shrubs, and create landscapes. They are divided into five nine-member teams. Team-building activities and exercises are performed with all the participants and leaders. With this teamwork, a healthy stewardship ethic can be explained and carried out. (*Greening of Detroit*)
2. To youth, our Learn About Forests (LAF) program offers access to the natural environment and the potential for a significant transformational experience in a forest setting. The journey—distance from city to rural forest—is critical to this experience. Over the years, our programming has validated the process, resulting in young people who have become more engaged in their community's activities than before. (*Eagle Eye Institute*)
3. We have developed a Stewardship for Young Trees program to generate committed community members and groups to care for trees. The original process for this program was to

Everyone Cares—
We bring environmental stewardship to their neighborhood, to their block, and to the tree in front of their house. Many of our community members have spent little time outside of the inner city, and they have not had the opportunity to walk through an old growth forest, swim in unpolluted rivers, or climb along mountain ridges. They may have a different relationship with the natural environment than I do, but everyone cares about where they live. Everyone wants to live on a clean, safe street.

—DC Greenworks

recruit stewards in areas with the highest need, i.e., the highest concentration of young trees. Recruitment techniques reflected a period of intense research into the community to take advantage of existing community organizations and strengths. (*New York City Parks and Recreation*)

4. Our Citizen Forester Program is designed to develop and nurture local leaders focused on tree planting and long-term stewardship. (*Casey Trees Endowment Fund*)

5. We use workshops, hands-on training, and free tools to motivate our community to care for and maintain their trees. We educate them about what is happening statewide in the community forestry arena. We offer local "gems" (residents who understand the importance of the urban forest) and local government officials a chance to attend statewide conferences with all expenses paid. We offer grants to write community forest management plans that map out long-term stewardship strategies. (*New Jersey Tree Foundation*)

6. We retain a large percentage of our program graduates as ongoing volunteers through hosting innovative work days in all neighborhoods all year long. (*Philadelphia Green*)

7. Our Community Forest Partnership gives residents the opportunity to become more active stewards of their urban forests. We train interested volunteers to collect data on street trees. Generally, we start out with one or two interested residents in a given neighborhood, but as we conduct the inventory, we begin to recruit others, who involve more and more people. (*Urban Ecology Institute*)

L. Our next steps to further catalyze a tree stewardship ethic

1. We will help our largest cities draft community forestry management plans and train staff and neighborhood volunteers.

2. We will continue to downplay the tree planting component of our projects. Trees need people to take care of them, and it is our role to make them excited and prepared to do so.

3. We intend to begin selling low-cost trees and charging a fee for training in some neighborhoods that will subsidize our training in others to break the cycle of dependency.

4. Our goal for The Green Corps (Detroit) is to have 10 teams of 10 individuals planting and maintaining trees and vacant lots. Furthermore, we will create lines of communication between The Green Corps and neighborhood residents, creating environmental ambassadors for the city.

5. To assess our stewardship programs, we will contact all of the volunteers we have engaged over the last 4 years to determine their level of activity or reasons for inactivity. We will use this data for the development of new or improved programs.

6. We will soon be looking more at legislative solutions and working to more actively engage elected officials in our stewardship efforts.

7. To ensure sustainability and demonstrate results, we will work with community stakeholders to develop physical and social strategies for greening, water quality, and quality-of-life improvements that are far more comprehensive and integrated with city development activities.

8. We will uncover, document, and present compelling personal stories about trees from people across the county, especially inner-city residents.
9. We intend to create a process for community residents to guide planning and implementation of ecosystem restoration in the watershed. This process involves listening to the voices and wishes of as many community residents who are willing to participate as possible.
10. Become more active in writing State and Federal grant proposals focused on catalyzing a stewardship ethic at the community scale.
11. We will continue to work at better communications and to get all players at the table early when starting new programs and projects. With earlier involvement, the community's goals can be built into our greening efforts.
12. Develop an inventory of experiential environmental education programs in the city and other urban settings in the region and State. We will use our approach of attraction, i.e., demonstrating the success of efforts that can be built upon locally, as well as replicated throughout a greater region.

M. Critical challenges we face in developing capacity within the community

1. We must break the cycle of dependency, encourage ownership of the projects we begin together, build more self-reliant communities, and work ourselves out of a job.
2. Our challenge is to find sustainable funding sources.
3. We will succeed only to the extent that we identify core community concerns and priorities, and capitalize on existing capacity.
4. We need a critical mass of staff and friends to increase our presence in the community and build relationships.
5. Prejudice must be eliminated among community groups that look down upon, distrust, or ignore one another.
6. Community leadership must be found and nurtured at all levels for successful restoration and rehabilitation projects.
7. One challenge is assessing who within the community best represents the desires and needs of the residents.
8. It is difficult to maintain relationships with community organizations that have high staff turnover rates.

9. Good municipal staff, budgets, and corporate memory are difficult to retain over time.
10. Our challenge is to help groups write grants and approach their legislators for funding…help them take that first big step towards self-sufficiency.
11. It is expensive to adapt programs to diverse communities of color, age, and income levels.
12. In our largest cities, it is a challenge to foster a culture of collaboration rather than competition.
13. We must be vigilant in maintaining credibility as an organization, mounting a united front, and keeping internal communication at a level where the organization is performing efficiently and effectively at all times.
14. A bottom-line challenge for us is to help people create a new vision for their community.

N. How we develop capacity within the community

1. At the State level, we assist communities in setting up a tree commission that hosts tree-planting events and writes and enforces an ordinance and management plan. We help them find and write grants, perform community outreach, get in-kind support, and link their community with local companies that are interested in tree planting and care activities.
2. Community organizing is the key to capacity building. We go to the neighborhood, meet with interested individuals at the site, and build from there. Meetings occur in key residents' homes, and the community group is encouraged to be a part of the decision and planning process. In high-rental areas, children are encouraged to participate in planting events, which usually attracts adults as well.
3. We are focused on youth training and business development in inner-city neighborhoods. We look for ways to connect with successful community-based programs that can be enhanced with an environmental or entrepreneurial component.
4. We have always had the ethic of "Do it right, or do it over" and always do it with "intent and purpose." This gives our programming a value base from which to work from and builds credibility in the neighborhoods and with donors.
5. We are working with residents to beautify low-cost housing with new front-yard plantings. Through workshops on plant care, maintenance, and landscaping, all participants have gained the

Funding for Program Administration— We must educate funding organizations about the need to support administrative costs. Without this, capacity building within nonprofits will continue to be limited. Bottom line: The proposal-generating process does not often meet the goals of the nongovernmental organization; there is no mechanism for input and little opportunity to build relationships from a distance.

—Nine Mile Run

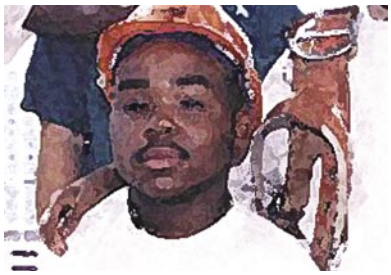
skills they need to implement and care for their plantings properly. Experienced gardeners in the community are improving their skills and assisting others.

6. Putting faces to names makes it easier for people to go to the next step—building community.

7. We involve residents from the beginning, enable them to organize and decide who wants trees, and support environmental education activities. Investing in community outreach and communicating with city officials ensure success.

O. Successful models in developing capacity within the community

1. We have created a network among all environmental education and stewardship program providers with the goal of developing more educated people power (capacity) through school education, which spans all grade levels through college. This effort is being tracked year by year to ensure that the greatest scope and involvement are achieved with minimal overlap or competition among education program providers. (*Southeast Environmental Task Force*)



2. We have converted our tree stewardship program into a TreeKeeper membership program. Residents can enroll as individual members committed to caring for one street tree near their home and receive a TreeGator watering device, a seasonal newsletter, and a membership card that earns discounts at local nurseries. A group

of seven neighbors can also enroll together as a TreeKeeper Community committed to adopting all of the trees on the block. This earns them access to our seasonal TreeCare workshops—the meat of our urban forestry program. These memberships show a level of individual or group interest and commitment that makes better use of our training resources. (*DC Greenworks*)

3. We run a decentralized program. We train others about trees and introduce participants to local and statewide resources and to the array of possible activities that they can participate in. We also reward groups for forming (four or more from a neighborhood). The groups then plan their own workdays or activities and invite us to participate. We do come out and provide onsite special training, and we offer continuing education programs for followup support. Finally, we offer grants once a year to Tree Tenders groups and have a heavily subsidized bare-root tree sale once a year. (*Philadelphia Green*)

4. We focus our attention on building champions who will replicate programs in their communities. These champions formalize the link to local natural resource professionals, youth organizations, and suitable natural settings to run effective youth programs. (*Eagle Eye Institute*)

Practices to Live By—

We stay flexible, adapt, learn, and change. We work with all organizations and individuals. We do not make value judgments about other organizations. We have persevered, which is very important in working with city agencies. We do not presume to know what is best or right for neighborhoods. We go with the flow, keeping in mind our general aim to improve environmental conditions and achieve a healthier community and a higher quality of life for people. We see ourselves as facilitators, brokers, and enablers rather than program administrators, grant managers, or community planners. We employ landscape designers, horticulturists, engineers, and arborists. But these skills do not define who we are or how we go about our work.

—Parks & People Foundation

P. Lessons learned in developing capacity within the community

1. Working with neighborhood associations has proven quite effective and rewarding because of their group cohesiveness and collective motivation to improve their neighborhood. They take our training and support, and they run with it.
2. We have shifted to a neighborhood- or watershed-targeted approach at a scale that residents and donors can see and measure. We focus our resources to improve community redevelopment projects from the inside out. Physical improvement attracts investors and developers.
3. We do not try to hog the media or always be the ones out front. We often let others take the credit.
4. Outreach and networking have helped to develop and strengthen community cohesion. Person by person we are strengthening partnerships across the metro area and weaving a mantle of skilled, motivated advocates for the urban forest that contributes to regional capacity.
5. We get volunteers to recruit more volunteers and train them as they go.
6. The secret to building capacity is early public involvement, education, and linkage with broader issues of importance to a community.
7. We build capacity through tree planting—linking children with elders or the city police officer with the Parks director—building momentum and inspiration through one-on-one experience.

Q. Our next steps to further develop capacity within the community

1. We will educate youth about trees and tree care, introduce them to the green industry, and provide summer employment in hopes they pursue careers in the green industry; we hope to at least instill an environmental ethic into the individuals who will be the city's future leaders.
2. We will begin meeting with community-based groups to build a stronger environmental link in existing annual events, outings, and projects as well as school activities.
3. The next step is to link communities and neighborhoods together through their planting experiences, thereby creating a network of groups interested in sustainable urban ecology.

4. We will encourage our community groups to think big and commit their time to improving tree boxes, pocket parks, and vacant lots.
5. We will develop jobs, careers, and businesses based on natural resource development, such as tree nurseries, greenhouses for high production, wood waste reuse, and others.
6. We will provide organizational development assistance to community-based organizations.
7. We will spur redevelopment of city neighborhoods to promote healthier, more ecologically balanced and diverse places for those who currently live and work there.
8. We will develop programs that better prepare teachers, community leaders, and organizational staff for leadership within their community.
9. We will increase acceptance of and adherence to local legislation and regulation of green architecture and infrastructure in the urban redevelopment process.
10. We will work with other existing organizations with community building skills and expertise rather than get into the business ourselves.
11. We will focus on our own organizational capacity, collaborative process, and long-term planning for sustainability, and we will engage youth in all stages of our development.
12. We will grow our volunteer base to represent the city's diversity.
13. We will ask our partners to do more and to stretch themselves to assure that investments have the greatest impact for the most people over time.

Persistence Works—
One of the groups we are currently working with was opposed to conducting any sort of outreach at the beginning of the season. After some discussion, we were able to convince them that it was important to involve additional residents so that the site would be well cared for once the planting is complete. Still, there were some residents that they felt would be a "waste of time" to talk to, since it was "obvious that they don't care about the neighborhood." We encouraged the participants to approach the additional residents, which we did by organizing two door-knocking outreach days. We found [that these residents] were quite concerned about the site in question and that they had wanted to clean it up for some time. These residents have been actively participating in the process ever since, and the original group members have begun bringing up the importance of making sure everyone is invested in the project.

—Urban Ecology Institute

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